

The founding of Aversa was an event of decisive importance. It marks the stage when the Normans cease to be mere hired swordsmen, serving this or that side without principle or ambition. At least one of their commanders had become a feudal lord holding a rich fief. Henceforth a dozen others follow his example; the new race takes a hold on Lower Italy which is never seriously shaken; from hired fighters they become "free companies" little distinguishable from banditti, their aim the deliberate and complete conquest of the land, not for Byzantine, German, or Lombard, but for themselves. The circumstances of Southern Italy were such as to give joy; to every adventurous heart; the struggle *inter se* of the Lombard and city-states, the clash of the two Empires, the intermittent revolts of Apulia against the Greeks all made it certain that they would reap the profit, who combined valour with such craft and prudence. One of their most readable chroniclers sums up both their own determination that war should only cease when it suited them and the circumstances which favoured their amazing triumphs:

They preferred war to treaties of peace. All thesis! princes have a great desire to dominate

the rest, hence
rise continual wars. The Normans
understood that
for their own interest they should not give
one of these
Lombard princes too decisive a victory,
hence they
fomented discord. Thanks to the
discords of Italy
the Gauls who for a moment had lost all
hope began